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# SOCIALISM and TARIFF REFORM :: :

— BY —  
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# Socialism and Tariff Reform.

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THE attraction which Tariff Reform has for the average elector is due to one thing, and to one thing only,—the claim which it makes to deal with the unemployed problem. Woven in with that claim is its appeal to the anti-foreigner prejudice which is still as strong in many parts of England as it is in China, the suggestion that it is always the duty of a patriot to curse the foreign devils; and the combination of this appeal to prejudice with the claim to deal with unemployment makes a very effective bait for the votes of the less educated electors.

Listen to the ordinary talk on the subject in railway carriages, in refreshment houses, in places of public resort, and you will note that the whole thing turns upon this: If foreign goods come into this country there must be so much the less work for Englishmen. That is the one single idea upon which Tariff Reform depends for making its appeal to the electors. At the general election of 1910, the instruction given to the advocates of Tariff Reform at the outset of the campaign was to “talk unemployment.” The circumstances of the moment were entirely favourable for such tactics. A period of unusually severe industrial depression had greatly increased the number of unemployed, and the terrible misery and destitution prevailing throughout England gave Tariff Reform its opportunity.

Everyone knows how that opportunity was used to the very uttermost. Leaving aside all detailed and complicated argument, Tariff Reformers, with a keen instinct for successful electioneering, set themselves to make this one single and simple appeal to the sentiment of the electors. The whole thing was summed up in the picture which was posted on every hoarding of the unemployed carpenter, sitting in an attitude of despair in his desolated home, exclaiming that “the foreigner’s got my job.” Day by day we were told of the quantity of foreign goods landed at our ports; of Swedish doors and window frames piled on our landing quays, while Englishmen who might have done the work were walking about workless. And day by day the moral of it was pointed by the repetition of the election cry, that “Tariff Reform means the only real remedy for unemployment.”

"You are out of work," the elector was told, "because our English market is flooded with foreign goods. The wages which you ought to be earning go to the foreigner. And the remedy for unemployment is Tariff Reform, which means that this work will be done in England by English workmen."

That is the appeal upon which Tariff Reform has made its headway; a catchy and plausible appeal, eminently calculated, on the face of it, to prove effective with the unemployed workman, and with the sentimental elector who has never seriously studied the economics of the problem.

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The purpose of this pamphlet is to show that it is a false appeal; that it is based upon a complete misunderstanding of the nature of the problem of unemployment; that the ordinary Free Trade reply to it is no reply at all, but is based upon the same misunderstanding; and to ask your consideration for the Socialist reply to it as the only valid and conclusive reply.

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REDUCED TO ITS SIMPLEST TERMS, THE THEORY OF TARIFF REFORM IS THAT THE REMEDY FOR UNEMPLOYMENT IS MORE EMPLOYMENT; THAT WHAT WE WANT IN THIS COUNTRY IS MORE WORK; AND THAT TARIFF REFORM WILL CREATE THAT WORK.

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Now, consider, first of all, the ordinary Free Trade reply to this. It is simply to deny that Tariff Reform would create more work. Everyone is familiar with the arguments under this head: how imports are paid for by exports; how manufactured articles coming into this country are largely the raw materials for further industrial processes; how you cannot tax leather, for example, in order to stimulate the tanning industry without ruining the boot and shoe trade; nor tax paper without destroying the printing industry, and so on; and how the whole thing would result in dearer prices all round, and a reduction in the purchasing power of wages.

All this is an insufficient and a feeble reply; and if the controversy were to be left to be fought out between Tariff Reform and Free Trade on these lines, I, for one, should have no doubt whatever as to the ultimate triumph of Tariff Reform.

And for this reason, that all this Free Trade argument leaves absolutely untouched the actual fact of poverty and destitution and unemployment in this country. It is merely a negative criticism. Nothing could be more ridiculous than

its exhibitions of black bread and horse-flesh sausages, which it represents to be the staple diet of people in Protectionist countries. For there are armies of English people who are, at any given moment, without the means of getting bread at all, black or otherwise; and an exhibition of an Englishman's dinner of pork scraps would make a worthy companion show to the horse-flesh sausages paraded by the Free Trader as an object lesson from Tariff Reform countries. "Hands off the Children's Bread," says the Free Trader; knowing perfectly well all the time that many thousands of children under Free Trade in England go to school every morning underfed and hungry, and that the average height and weight of the children of the poor in England is below the healthy normal, because of habitual under-nourishment. Evidently somebody has got his hands on the children's bread under Free Trade as well as under Protection. The whole thing resolves itself into the pot calling the kettle black; and Tariff Reform, with its plausible appeal for English work for English workmen, would undoubtedly triumph in the end over the mere negatives of the orthodox Free Trade case.

Nor would it greatly matter if it were to triumph. We Socialists are not very deeply concerned with so trumpery an issue as this between capitalist Free Trade and Tariff Reform. There are certain considerations, upon which I shall touch in a moment, which lead us to regard Tariff Reform as the shabbier of the two capitalist alternatives; but in its purely economic aspect we do not believe that the issue between Free Trade and Tariff Reform makes three ha'porth of difference to the workers of the world. We are entirely with the Free Traders in declaring that Tariff Reform is no remedy for poverty and unemployment; but that leaves us still face to face with the fact that the poverty and unemployment, for which a remedy is being sought, is a fact under Free Trade just as dreadful as it is under tariffs.

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We ask you to look at the facts. Under Free Trade and under Protection alike huge populations live sordid animal lives in the festering slums of our modern industrial cities, children go cold and hungry, armies of men and women slink through life in furtive criminality. If Free Trade London has its hooligans, Protectionist Paris has its apaches. There is no extreme of human deprivation, no squalid and joyless round of existence, no filth or blasphemy that cannot be found alike under Protection and under Free Trade.

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The Socialist challenge to the existing order of things goes deeper. We ask you to believe—and it is only plain

elementary common-sense to ask you to believe—that when the same phenomena of human misery and degradation exist under both Protection and Free Trade, the cause of that misery and degradation cannot be either Protection or Free Trade, but something which is common to both Protection and Free Trade. Under both systems millions of people tremble through life on the margin of starvation. All that silly controversy which Tariff Reformers and Free Traders carry on as to whether people in Germany are or are not a shade better off than people in England—whether it is better to live on black bread and horse flesh in Berlin, or on charity soup in London—is beside the mark. Even if one side or the other in such a controversy could make out its case, our reply would be that the whole standard of working-class life under both systems is so far below a decent human standard of life as to make the difference between them merely a difference between Tweedledum and Tweedledee. Protection and Free Trade are not different orders of life. They are only two slightly different ways of carrying on the same order of life, based alike upon the exploitation of the workers for the profit of a proprietary class—if, indeed, one can speak as an “order of life” of the utter disorder and chaos of life under private capitalism. From the point of view of the wage-earning class, the whole controversy is very much like asking a goose with which of two sauces it would prefer to be cooked; and the business about which Socialists are concerned is to prevent the goose from being cooked at all.

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The ordinary Free Trade reply to Tariff Reform is, therefore, wholly unsatisfactory. It may disprove Tariff Reform. It may show that under Tariff Reform we should have the same sort of squalor we already have under Free Trade. It may, as against the facts of poverty in England, quote the facts of poverty in Protectionist countries by way of demonstrating that Tariff Reform is as bad as, or possibly worse than, itself. But all its arguments leave the actual facts of poverty and unemployment untouched. Here, as actual facts in this country, are poverty, unemployment, slums, hungry children, suicides through want, and prisons, workhouses, and brothels full of human wreckage produced by modern capitalism. And in the face of these facts, the merely negative arguments of Free Trade against Tariff Reform will most certainly not avail in the long run to prevent a desperate public opinion from giving a trial to the other quackery which promises better things.

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The cause of the evil of poverty and unemployment is, I therefore suggest to you, to be found in something which both Free Traders and Tariff Reformers are agreed in maintaining

and upholding. What is that something? Let us look at the facts and see.

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As I pointed out a few paragraphs back, the Tariff Reform case, reduced to its simplest terms, is that what we want in this country is more work, and that Tariff Reform will provide that work.

Here are two separate statements: the primary statement that what we want is more work; and the secondary statement that Tariff Reform will provide it for us.

The ordinary Free Trader simply challenges the secondary statement, and denies that Tariff Reform would provide more work.

*The Socialist challenges the primary statement itself.*

*It is not more work that we want. The remedy for unemployment is not more employment. It is because Free Traders and Tariff Reformers are alike agreed upon the "more work" fallacy that they are alike helpless in face of the squalour and misery of life under both their systems.*

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At this point in the argument I can imagine a good many readers being tempted to throw this pamphlet down, and to declare that of all the ridiculous absurdities ever propounded this is surely the most ludicrous. Surely, you say to yourself, it stands to reason that if a man is out of work, what he wants is work. Is he to be maintained in idleness? And how is he to get work unless means are devised for making more work available? I ask such readers to have patience for a moment, and to follow the argument. My purpose is to show that it is this view of the nature of the problem of unemployment—that it is merely a problem of providing more work—which is the falsity at the root of the whole controversy. Assuming for the moment that you are right in saying that if a man is out of work, what he wants is work, it does not at all follow that the only way in which he can get work is that more work should be made available.

It may be that the solution of the difficulty is to be found in the organisation and adjustment on other lines of the existing activities of the nation. It may even be that, instead of devising more work, a sane nation would set itself to discourage a good deal of the work now being carried on. Think, for example, of the enormous and commercially successful business now carried on in semi-obscene and suggestive weekly periodicals. Let us not be too hasty in jumping to conclusions.

Is it more work that is wanted in this country? I ask you, in all seriousness, to carry your enquiry into this great problem deep enough to examine with careful criticism that accepted view of the nature of the problem.

Let me trouble you with just one set of figures. In 1901 the amount of income assessed to income tax in this country was £833,000,000; in 1908 it was £980,000,000, an increase of £147,000,000 in seven years. The incomes of the comfortable and rich classes during these seven years have increased by an average of £21,000,000 every year. And this increase has been most marked in the industrial profits of English trades. I could belabour you with many detailed statistics, but these are sufficient for my purpose. You see the point of them? What they show is that the actual production of wealth in this country is going up by leaps and bounds.

WHAT IS HAPPENING IS NOT THAT WEALTH PRODUCTION IS DECREASING IN ENGLAND AND NEEDS STIMULATING. NO; WHAT IS HAPPENING IS THAT Owing TO THE CONSTANT DEVELOPMENT OF MACHINERY AND THE GROWTH OF GREAT JOINT-STOCK COMPANIES WHICH AVOID THE WASTE OF COMPETITION, WE ARE STEADILY PRODUCING MORE AND MORE WEALTH WITH LESS AND LESS LABOUR. AND THE PROBLEM WHICH CONFRONTS OUR CIVILISATION IS NOT THE PROBLEM OF CONSTANTLY FINDING MORE AND MORE EMPLOYMENT FOR THOSE WHO ARE THROWN OUT OF WORK BY THESE PROCESSES, BUT THE PROBLEM OF TURNING THESE PROCESSES TO THE BENEFIT OF THE GENERAL NATIONAL LIFE INSTEAD OF TO THE PROFIT OF THE FEW; THE PROBLEM OF GETTING INTO THE LIVES AND HOMES OF THE PEOPLE THE WEALTH WHICH WE ARE ACTUALLY PRODUCING.

That, in brief, is the Socialist case against both Tariff Reform and Free Trade—against the private capitalism for which both Tariff Reform and Free Trade stand. Tariff Reform as a proposed cure for unemployment, assumes that the industry of the country will continue to be owned and controlled for the private profit of a proprietary class, and that the only hope for the disinherited class is that there should be more and more jobs come in to create a demand for their labour.

We Socialists deny that assumption. We assert that the only hope for the worker is that our industry should cease to be run upon such maniac lines at all, and that the nation should own and administer its own industry, so that the abundant wealth which that industry produces may be made available for the general life, may get into the homes of the people, and be produced under conditions of leisure and comfort for the worker.

What is happening, I repeat, is that year by year the modern civilised world is producing more and more wealth with less and less labour in proportion to that wealth. It is in the very nature of invention and of the machine industry to bring about that result. The product of industry increases without a corresponding increase in the number of workers.

And this increased and constantly increasing power of wealth production is privately owned, and is used for the sole purpose of making private profits for its owners. The inevitable consequence of that private ownership is the poverty of the class of non-owners and the unemployment of large numbers of them. Think it out carefully. It ought to be a blessing to the whole world, this constantly increasing power of men, with the aid of machinery and invention and organisation, to multiply their production of wealth, and to make the labour of an hour more fruitful than the labour of a day or a week used to be. To produce more wealth with less effort and in less time, ought to mean more leisure and more comfort for everybody, more resources for life, more means to apply to general public purposes, as well as more comfort in the private homes of the people—a steadily increasing equipment of the country with the means of a full life for all its citizens.

And so it would be if the nation owned and controlled its own industry and carried on wealth production as a national service.

But we have no national industry. Our industry is owned and controlled by a comparatively few people. Under such private ownership, it is the interest of the private owner to get as much wealth produced by as little labour as possible. It is not the human life of the nation, but the private profit of the owner, that industry is carried on to serve. Labour is merely one of the expenses the owner has to incur, one of the costs of production, to be kept down as much as possible. And every new invention drives things more and more in that direction. It is all to the advantage of the owner. The whole industry of the nation is organised for his benefit. His wealth, as we have seen, goes up by leaps and bounds. He hardly knows what to do with the increasing volume of it which flows in upon him, except that he is quite sure that it is confiscation and robbery to ask him to devote any portion of it to old age pensions for worn-out labourers, or to an adequate system of medical treatment for ailing children. His scale of luxurious expenditure increases. The very wealthy man of a century ago would be a comparatively poor man in the modern world of huge fortunes and magnificent luxury. The standard of competitive social ostentation goes up and up. "Where one house sufficed, now two are demanded; where a dinner of a certain quality, now a dinner of a superior quality; where clothes or dresses or flowers, now more clothes, more dresses, more flowers." The motor car, the modern steam

yacht, the deer forest, the life of great hotels, the clubs, the more and more elaborate banquets, the more and more costly sports and travels and exchanges of social entertainments on a lavish scale, all these things testify to the way in which private ownership of the means of the world's work diverts into the possession of the owner the whole benefit of man's increasing powers of wealth production.

And on the other hand are the mass of the people who can only live by selling their labour to the owners of the means of work, selling their labour for a bare maintenance out of its own product, the surplus going to the owner. And to them the process of invention brings little benefit. In the midst of abounding wealth and constantly increasing powers of production we have a huge disinherited population shut out from participation in it. To the men whose only means of living is to find a market for their labour, it is by no means a blessing that wealth production which formerly required the use of their labour for ten hours, should now only require the use of it for an hour. The new machine which multiplies wealth production for the owner, the new concentration and organisation of a trade which eliminates labour by eliminating competition, are to them only a further limitation of their chances of selling their labour. The owner can dispense with them. They become superfluous. A certain proportion of them, driven out from a share in the useful industry of the nation, are taken into all sorts of service in connection with the sports and luxuries of the proprietor class, and by that process working-class life is in a large degree degraded into parasitic industry, the whole thing being maintained upon the useful productive industry, in which labour constantly dwindle and dwindle in proportion to increasing output.

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Science and invention are offering us the copious and abundant means of a resplendent national life. And this is the best use we have yet learned to make of the offer! Picture to yourself a nation sane enough, far-sighted and courageous enough, to make these great gifts and powers the foundation of a national life, instead of the monopoly and endowment of a class life. Think of the possible splendours of it! And then think of the slum quarters of your city! The very processes of industry which would enable such a nation to guarantee a high standard of life to all its people are the processes which, so long as they are privately owned and worked for private profit, drive out of employment the man whose only means of living under such a system is to find an owner to buy his labour. They make his labour unnecessary. And they might be used to make all

labour easier, to give increasing leisure with increasing comfort to all men.

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No, it is not more work we want; it is the national organisation of the national work for national needs, the ending of those claims to exclusive private ownership of the means of the nation's work which enable the owning class to drain away in tribute the resources that should go to build up a great life for the whole nation. Tariff Reform is the merest quackery. You cannot touch even the fringe of this great problem of poverty by fiscal changes, or by juggling with import taxes. And the Free Trader who talks about our "abounding prosperity" under Free Trade is equally as futile a person as the Tariff Reformer who suggests that import taxes will make England a paradise. The abounding prosperity of the modern commercial world is the abounding prosperity of the proprietary classes only. To quote trade statistics, increases of export trade, and all the rest of it, is all part of the same misunderstanding of the real nature of the problem—the misunderstanding of supposing that it is more work we want. It is quite true that the resources of the nation are large and are increasing; but they are not available for the general life of the nation, and the real nature of the problem is to make them available. It is quite true, as Lord Avebury puts it in his glorification of Free Trade, that "the total of our exports and our imports last year was the largest volume of commerce ever transacted by either our own or any other country in the history of the world." The more shame to us that side by side with it the total of human misery and deprivation has also been as great as was ever endured in the history of the world. There is the real problem—the problem of getting these immense resources of which Free Traders boast into the homes of the nation. The real reply to the Tariff Reform propaganda is not the Free Trade reply, with its averages of incomes and of exports and imports, or even of savings bank deposits and friendly society funds, representing the crumbs which fall from the lavish table of modern civilisation to the dogs underneath. In spite of all that, there is the long procession of men thronging to register themselves as unemployed on the day of the opening of the Labour Exchanges. In spite of all that, about a third of our labouring population is housed in tenements of one, two, or three rooms, under crowded conditions, where decency is impossible and morality is a miracle. In spite of all that, in my own comparatively small provincial city, the Education Committee, of which I am a member, had imposed upon it last winter the grim duty of providing dinners daily for sixteen hundred children, who were found to be attending school suffering from hunger to a degree rendering them unable to receive instruction, and when we had snow on the streets

hundreds of them were unable to come and get their dinners because they had either no boots or only the rotten remnants of boots to come in. Instead of talking rubbish about our abounding prosperity under Free Trade, what we have to do is to set up a definite constructive policy of social and industrial change which will make the nation the owner of its own means to work, and so diffuse the benefits of proprietorship over the whole community.

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Tariff Reform is simply an attempt, in the interests of the proprietor class, to divert the attention of the working-class elector away from this real issue. His political power, if he chooses to use it for the emancipation of his class, makes him master in the nation, and Tariff Reform is an attempt to keep his mind closed against any consideration of a new and better order of things, to concentrate his attention and his hope within the existing order, to get him to continue to believe that his eternal destiny is to be shut out from ownership of the means of his work, and to remain in a disinherited position with no other way of living than to sell his labour for a bare existence paid out of his own product.

And in order to do this, Tariff Reform plays down to one of the least worthy of the uncivilised instincts which still survive amongst the less educated classes in civilised nations. It has set the Chinese "foreign devil" agitation a-going full blast in England. No worse immorality, no greater crime against the progress of the human race, could be committed than the fostering of this spirit of enmity between nations. It is a spirit contrary to the discernible law of progress in human affairs. It is in this that Tariff Reform reveals itself as the shabbier and more reactionary of the two capitalist alternatives. Its whole machinery of tariffs and imposts and barriers between nations is the machinery of reaction, of strife and enmity between nations, threatening peace and friendly relationships.

The enemy of the worker is not the foreigner. The enemy is the sweater, the exploiter of industry, the man who lives upon other people's labour; and he is just as much the enemy when he is an Englishman as when he is a foreigner. If this country were invaded and over-run by a foreign power, it would be a precious clever set of new foreign masters who could skin the English worker more effectively than he is skinned by his present English masters and owners. The English worker and the German worker, the workers of the whole civilised world, have one common interest—the common interest of throwing off their serfdom to an owning class, and of becoming the masters of their own lives by becoming the co-operative owners of their own means of work.

Here we are, a nation with abundant capacity for wealth production, with resources ample to secure a high standard of life for all our people. Tariff Reform and Free Trade alike assume that these powers of wealth production, and the land and capital necessary for exercising them, must remain private property.

The whole nation must live upon the wealth produced by the labour of hand and brain using that land and capital. There stands your nation, with its means of work privately owned, and the mass of its people, possessed of the necessary powers of hand and brain, shut out from access to the means of work except upon such terms as they can make with the owners. They are in the labour market, dependent for their livelihood upon the chance of an owner requiring their labour. The owner dips into the labour market and takes in what labour he requires, his terms being that the whole of what that labour produces shall belong to him in return for mere maintenance for the labourer, maintenance produced by the labourer's own work. The owner's interest is to get as great a surplus as possible, to get the largest product at the least charge upon it for maintaining labour in producing it. The function of the working population is to produce this surplus for the owners—to be allowed in by the day or by the week in order to produce it, retaining out of the value of their own product, in the form of wages, a sufficient maintenance to enable them to do their work; and then to stand aside and starve in unemployment in the midst of the bountiful products of their own labour, while the owner works off upon the markets of the world the surplus production of their industry. And all the time the scale of luxurious living of the owner, thanks to the increased productivity of modern labour, goes up and up.

What the wage-earners want under these circumstances, says the Tariff Reformer, is that there should incessantly be more work, more call for wealth production, more markets opened up in all quarters of the world, at a rate rapid enough to prevent the products of their labour (constantly increasing per hour by reason of machine development) from accumulating in overproduction, and to make up for the constant displacement of labour by invention and the more consolidated organisation of production.

Was ever such madness, such national imbecility?

What they need is to cease to be a disinherited class, to realise that they are the nation, that this private ownership is merely parasitic upon their industry, and that the abundant wealth now drained away from them in tribute to ownership is loot taken from a subject nation by its masters; and, realising this, to end this system of production for profit, and begin to organise national production for national use.

The growth of this idea is the great and dominant factor in contemporary politics, not in this country only, but in every country throughout the civilised world. The contest between Tariff Reform and ordinary Free Trade is a mere trivial conflict within the old order of things, a conflict between sections of the proprietary classes, who look forward to a future of the race in which their private ownership of the means of life is to be the permanent order of things. But the disinherited classes, the wage-earners of the world, are rapidly developing a class consciousness of their position as a position of disinheritance, and are ceasing to take for granted any principle of social organisation, any institution, however many centuries of prestige there may be behind it, which shuts them out from the full life of the common human heritage. The parties of the future are the Socialist Party and the party of private ownership, and the issue between them is not the contemptible issue of choosing between insufficient black bread and horse flesh in Berlin and insufficient white bread and dripping in England, but the social enfranchisement of the disinherited class into full human life; the destruction of poverty by freeing the resources of the world from tribute to private ownership, and bringing them under public organisation and control for the use and benefit of the whole community.

# Independent Labour Party.

Head Office: 23, Bride Lane, Fleet Street, London, E.C.

## OBJECT.

The object of the Party is to establish the Socialist State, when land and capital will be held by the community and used for the well-being of the community, and when the exchange of commodities will be organized also by the community, so as to secure the highest possible standard of life for the individual. In giving effect to this object it shall work as part of the International Socialist movement.

## METHOD.

The Party, to secure its objects, adopts:—

1. EDUCATIONAL METHODS, including the publication of Socialist literature, the holding of meetings, etc.
2. POLITICAL METHODS, including the election of its members to local and national administrative and legislative bodies.

## PROGRAMME.

The true object of industry being the production of the requirements of life, the responsibility should rest with the community collectively, therefore:

The land being the storehouse of all the necessities of life should be declared and treated as public property.

The capital necessary for industrial operations should be owned and used collectively.

Work, and wealth resulting therefrom, should be equitably distributed over the population.

As a means to this end, we demand the enactment of the following measures:—

1. A maximum 48 hours working week, with the retention of all existing holidays, and Labour Day, May 1st, secured by law.

2. The provision of work to all capable adult applicants at recognised trade union rates, with a statutory minimum of sixpence per hour.

3. State pensions for every person

over 50 years of age, and adequate provision for all widows, orphans and sick and disabled workers.

4. Free secular, moral, primary, secondary, and university education, with free maintenance while at school or university.

5. The raising of the age of child labour, with a view to its ultimate extinction.

6. Municipalisation and public control of the Drink Traffic.

7. Municipalisation and public control of all Hospitals and Infirmaries.

8. Abolition of indirect taxation and the gradual transference of all public burdens on to unearned incomes with a view to their ultimate extinction.

The Independent Labour Party is in favour of adult suffrage, with full political rights and privileges for women, and the immediate extension of the franchise to women on the same terms as granted to men; also triennial Parliaments and the second ballot.

## MEMBERSHIP.

Open to all Socialists who endorse the objects and methods of the Party, who are not members of either the Liberal or Conservative Party and whose application is accepted by a branch.

## APPLICATION FORM.

I, the undersigned, desire to be enrolled a member of the I.L.P.

Name in full .....

Address .....

If you approve the principles and policy of the I.L.P., sign this Form and return to Head Office: 23, Bride Lane, Fleet Street, London, E.C., and you will be informed of the nearest Branch of the Party.

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